



Housing Plan Implementation Committee

Date: March 5, 2020

Time: 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM

Location: First Floor Conference Room, Town Hall Annex

Minutes

Present: Lourie August, Pam Hallett, Karen Kelleher, Jenny Raitt, Patricia Worden, Erin Zwirko.

Absent: Jonathan Nyberg.

To begin the meeting, Erin noted that the Select Board would hold their hearing on the trust fund and the real estate transfer fee on March 23rd. Jenny noted she would be present to answer questions that might come from the Select Board, and encouraged HPIC members to attend as well.

On the materials for the Trust Fund, Karen noted that the longer report, Report of the Housing Plan Implementation Committee to the Select Board, was intended to define the problem that Arlington has with affordability and how the trust could help address those issues. Jenny noted that the memo titled Warrant Article 19 – Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a brief report on what the Committee has discussed. The longer report may not even need to be submitted to the Select Board, but it was worth circulating it to the Committee. It was noted that there are two outstanding discussion points outlined in the memo: whether the trust can only fund 100% affordable projects, and whether Town Meeting and/or the Select Board must have oversight on the sales.

The Committee first discussed whether the trust should be able to fund projects that are not 100% affordable. After a discussion on the fact that the trust fund legislation requires that the funds are only dedicated to affordable units, the Committee considered whether that this item may be superfluous. Karen pointed out that there might be improved outcomes in 40B projects that are funded by a trust. Additionally, the Board of Trustees would have to agree that a project was worthy of funding as well.

On the second item, the Committee discussed that the benefit of a trust fund is that it is able to act nimbly when opportunities arise. The Committee agreed that if Town Meeting needed to approve sales, transfers, leases, etc, those opportunities would be lost. The Committee then discussed whether it made sense for the Select Board have oversight on this item which was strongly supported by Patricia. For the purposes of the memo to the Select Board, the Committee discussed revisions that would put the decision in the hands of the Select Board.

On other topics related to the trust fund, Karen noted that there should be stronger collaboration and coordination with other Boards and Committees that have some oversight on housing. Jenny noted that there is some desire to align the committees with finance review. Karen noted that she would want representatives from these boards as non-voting members, but others on the Committee were uncomfortable with asking for representatives. The Committee discussed whether this topic should be added to the memo, and it was determined that it could be a talking point.

The Committee reviewed the amendments to the memo on the trust fund. Patricia made a motion to accept the revisions, and Pam seconded. The vote was unanimous. Pam then made a motion to approve the memo as amended, and Karen seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Moving onto the discussion about the real estate transfer fee, Erin noted that she had worked with the GIS director to produce a graphic that mapped sales across the community. She noted that she will check the upper limit and that the graphic included all of the 2019 sales and not just residential.

The Committee then began reviewing the memo titled Warrant Article 20 – Real Estate Transfer Fee. The Committee members felt strongly that the members do not have enough information to make recommendations to the Select Board on three items: the threshold where the real estate transfer fee applies, the percentage that is assessed, and which party is responsible for the fee. Patricia objected to the use of the state median figure rather than the Arlington median for the threshold. The Committee discussed specific changes to the memo to remove specific recommendations and rather focus on a range of options that the Select Board should consider.

The Committee also discussed whether there needs to be more engagement prior to Town Meeting. Karen thought that without making recommendations, the Warrant Article will be set up for deferral to a future year. Jenny noted that since this Warrant Article calls for a home rule petition, there is time to enter into a dialogue after Town Meeting, should Town Meeting endorse the home rule petition. The needed information, in particular, the threshold where the real estate transfer fee applies, the percentage that is assessed, and which party is responsible for the fee, but also exemptions, could be developed after Town Meeting.

Patricia made a motion that the memo titled Warrant Article 20 – Real Estate Transfer Fee is acceptable with the revisions discussed. Karen seconded. The vote was unanimous.

On the minutes from February 6, 2020, Karen made a motion to approve the minutes and Lourie seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Patricia made a motion to adjourn which was seconded and voted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.